

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 EB-11 COME-00 MC-02 OMB-01

SAJ-01 MBFR-04 DRC-01 /159 W
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R 251647Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 972

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 10200

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR IT MASS SF

SUBJECT: ITALIAN FIRM REPORTEDLY NEGOTIATING TO SELL TRAINER
AIRCRAFT TO SOUTH AFRICA

1. FOR PAST TWO DAYS ITALIAN AND FOREIGN PRESS HAVE BEEN
REPORTING THAT ITALIAN AIRCRAFT COMPANY AERMACCHI IS NEGOTIATING
TO SELL ABOUT 200 ADVANCED MB326K TRAINERS FOR ASSEMBLY UNDER
LICENSE ARRANGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA. PRESS REPORTS CLAIMED THAT
ITALIAN GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN INFORMED OF DEAL AND NO RPT NO
POLITICAL PROBLEM INVOLVED SINCE PLAN3S FOR TRAINING PURPOSES
ONLY. PRESS NOTED ITALY OBSERVED UN ARMS EMBARGO TO SOUTH
AFRICA. REPORTS ALSO ALLEGE THAT UK GOVERNMENT HAS OBJECTED
TO DEAL SINCE ENGINE FOR AERMACCHI TRAINER IS PRODUCED IN
ITALY UNDER ROLLS ROYCE LICENSE.

2. ON SEPTEMBER 25 WE QUERIED RESPONSIBLE ITALIAN FOREIGN
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MINISTRY OFFICIAL ABOUT PRESS REPORTS. HE RESPONDED THAT GOI

HAD NOT RPT NOT BEEN EITHER INFORMED OR CONSULTED BY AERMACCHI ON REPORTED DEAL BEING NEGOTIATED WITH SOUTH AFRICA. OFFICIAL RECALLED THAT SOUTH AFRICANS ALREADY PRODUCING AERMACCHI TRAINER OF EARLIER TYPE UNDER LICENSE, BUT THAT THIS LICENSE HAD BEEN GRANTED BEFORE UN ARMS EMBARGO. SOURCE SAID THAT IF AERMACCHI NEGOTIATING A "NEW DEAL" IT WOULD REQUIRE APPROVAL BY GOI INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE AND SUCH APPROVAL HIGHLY UNLIKELY BECAUSE OF ITALIAN STRICT ADHERENCE TO UN EMBARGO. OFFICIAL REMARKED THAT AIRCRAFT COULD HARDLY BE PASSED OFF SOLELY AS TRAINERS SINCE THEY WERE EASILY ADAPTED TO ARMAMENT. SOURCE EXPRESSED PUZZLEMENT OVER AERMACCHI'S MOTIVES IN PUBLICIZING DEAL WITH SOUTH AFRICA, IF INDEED COMPANY WAS SOURCE OF STORY.

3. OFFICIAL SAID ITALIANS HAD ALREADY RECEIVED PROTESTS FROM ZAMBIA AND TANZANIA OVER REPORTED POSSIBILITY THAT ITALIAN AIRCRAFT WOULD BE ACQUIRED BY SOUTH AFRICA. HE SAID ITALIANS HAVE ALREADY REASSURED BOTH COUNTRIES THAT GOI HAS GIVEN NO RPT NO APPROVAL TO ANY SUCH DEAL, AND CONTINUES POLICY OF STRICT ADHERENCE TO UN ARMS EMBARGO. VOLPE

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